



**Committee on
Homeland Security** Democrats
Bennie G. Thompson, Ranking Member

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For Immediate Release:
October 18, 2005

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**RANKING MEMBER BENNIE G. THOMPSON (D-MS), OPENING STATEMENT ON
“NATIONAL CYBER SECURITY AWARENESS MONTH”**

“In this age of telecommunications, never before has it been easier for people around the globe to communicate, do business, and learn from one another. With the Internet, we can pay our bills, converse electronically with each other in real time, and read millions of articles in almost every publication around the world. But while the Internet presents us with great opportunities, it also imposes great challenges. As we become increasingly reliant on technology to assist us in our daily lives, we must also increase our vigilance in protecting that technology from those who wish to use it for malevolent purposes.

“Individuals should follow some simple, basic steps to protect themselves and their personal information when they use the Internet. Using strong passwords, anti-virus software, and firewalls are all ways to self-secure one’s online information. Furthermore, online consumers must be particularly careful about whom they are dealing with to ensure that their information does not wind up in the wrong hands.

“While there are many things that individuals should do to protect themselves, our federal government must also remain vigilant in protecting our nation’s electronic infrastructure. Across America, millions of people rely on computerized control systems to provide electricity, monitor oil pipelines, distribute water, and harness nuclear power. Though many of these systems are secure, terrorists and hackers presently seek to infiltrate vulnerable computers to wreak havoc and destroy our way of life. The results of a cyber attack against our nation’s critical infrastructure could be incredibly damaging to our economy and may possibly result in significant losses of life.

“Led by the Department of Homeland Security, the federal government is aware of the harms of a cyber attack and is working to prevent any damaging attacks. But although our nation has thus far avoided becoming the victim of a significant cyber attack, we cannot be complacent. I commend the hard work by DHS to strengthen and secure our cyber space, but encourage the agency to dedicate more time and resources to this issue.

“DHS as a whole has been slow in completing its critical infrastructure protection policies, an important goal in protecting America’s cyber space. In December 2003, President Bush issued Presidential Directive 7: Critical Infrastructure Identification, Prioritization, and Protection (HSPD-7) establishing a national policy for federal departments and agencies to prioritize critical infrastructure, including cyber-related infrastructure. DHS was charged with developing the National Infrastructure Protection Plan (NIPP) to serve as the guide for protecting infrastructure. The NIPP was due in December 2004. In February 2005, an “Interim NIPP” was issued, setting a deadline of November 2005 for the “Final NIPP.” According to the General Accounting Office, the “Interim NIPP” was incomplete: it lacked both national-level milestones and sector-specific security plans.¹ The “Final NIPP” remains incomplete to this day.

“The GAO has also criticized DHS for failing to build better partnerships and information-sharing relationships between the public and private sectors to improve cyber security.² Such partnerships are essential to effective coordination among all levels of government and between the public and private sectors. DHS has also failed to develop or deploy an effective analysis and warning system in the event of a cyber attack.³ This is an important step in preparing the country for cyber attack.

“Securing our cyber space is not an obligation we can afford to delay. I encourage DHS to act quickly in addressing these issues, just as I encourage all Americans to take pro-active measures in protecting themselves online. Let’s all recommit ourselves to protecting our personal information and our national cyber infrastructure during this “Month of Awareness” and in the years ahead.”

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¹ *Id.* at 29.

² *Id.* at 33.

³ *Id.* at 36.